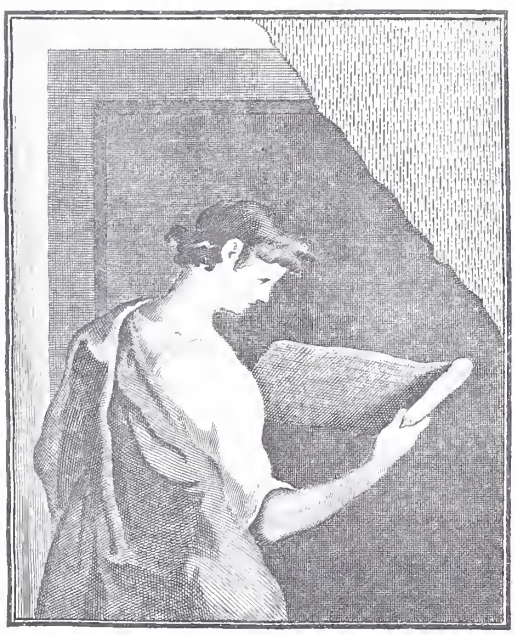

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JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET.

CARDING.

(*La Cardeuse.*)

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET.

TWENTY

ETCHINGS AND WOODCUTS

REPRODUCED IN FAC-SIMILE,

AND

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE,

BY

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY.

"And the Bible, François, have you forgotten it? and the Psalms, do you ever read them?"

"They are my breviary," said Millet, "I get from them all that I do."

SENSIER'S *Millet*, p. 108.

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1881.

MILLET: A BIOGRAPHY.

IT is characteriſtic of the French mind to be ſlow and ſtubborn in its apprehenſion of new ideas, and to be quick to aſſimilate and adopt them, once their apprehenſion is accompliſhed. Such Frenchmen, therefore, as are unlucky enough to be intellectually ahead of their epoch, are aſſured beforehand of a portion mainly compacted of miſery and diſappointment, and may be ſaid to work not ſo much for their contemporaries as for their more or leſs immediate poſterity. They produce their diſcovery to a generation unprepared and unreceptive; and it is conſidered with deriſion, or overlooked with indifference. Preſently it becomes familiar, and ſo—in a certain ſenſe—reſpectable. It puts off its abſurdity as it ceaſes to be abnormal and ſtrange; and, in courſe of time, it achieves due recognition, is converted into a common poſſeſſion, and is utilized and wrought at with enthuſiaſm. Meanwhile, the man originally reſponſible for it has diſappeared, not trailing clouds of glory, but clouds of penury and wretchedneſs. This has only to be known to be univerſally deplored. He enters into a kind of apotheoſis forthwith. He was pennileſs and hungry while he lived; but he is famous after death, and men may wax fat and rich in praiſing him. The æſthetic hiſtory of modern France abounds in inſtances and examples. The hot and heady valour of the men of 1830 notwithſtanding, it is evident that the theory and practice of Romanticiſm were wholly ſucceſſful in not a ſingle one of the arts. It was in literature that the

moſt brilliant victories of the revolutionary party were won; but neither Balzac nor Dumas were ever recognized officially for great writers, and there were ſcores of others as unfortunate, if not as powerful, as they. It was worſe ſtill in muſic. Berlioz, perhaps the moſt original and able maſter ſince Beethoven, could only live by writing articles, and to get a hearing for his works was obliged to produce them abroad. And in painting it was worſt of all. Delacroix, in ſpite of his prodigious talent and his ſplendid ſtrength of character, was never acclaimed as he deſerved until he was well nigh at the end of his career. "Voilà trente ans que je ſuis livré aux bêtes," he ſaid; and the ſaying was a fair deſcription of his poſition. Théodore Rouſſeau, one of the kings of modern landſcape—"le Grand Refuſé," as he was called—was thruſt out of the Salon ten or twelve years running. Corot, the inventor of a new principle in landſcape, ſpent the greater part of his life in trying to perſuade the dealers to buy for next to nothing canvaſſes they afterwards thought cheap at any price he pleaſed to put on them. Méryon, who is juſt now a ſteady ſource of income to the print-ſellers, had a public ſome ten or fifteen ſtrong at the moſt, could ſeldom or never get a franc each for proofs of his fineſt etchings, and died a madman and an utter failure. With Millet, a man of incomparably greater mind and ſtronger character, it was almoſt as bad as with Méryon. The meſſage he had to deliver was one ſpoken from himſelf; and he paid to the uttermoſt farthing that penalty the world is wont to exact from his kind. His ſtory is one as fruitful of mortifying and humiliating reflections as exiſts in the annals of art.

I.

In the commune of Gréville, on the iron-bound coaſt of La Manche, ſtands the little hamlet of Gruchy. It is built at the ſea's edge, on the granite cliffs of the Hogue, overlooking the ſtormy waters of Cherbourg Roads; but it is ſituate, for all that, in a fertile and

pleaſant country, rich in graſs and corn and wood, covered with herds and flocks, and peopled with a race of huſbandmen. It was there, on the 4th of October, 1814, that Millet was born.

He came of excellent ſtock on both ſides, and is, indeed, as admirable an expreſſion of the nobler type of peaſant as is known. A remarkable man himſelf, he had remarkable men and women for his kindred. His father's mother, Louise Jumelin, was a perſon of great depth and ſtrength of character. Robuſt and energetic, profoundly religious, uncommonly intelligent, full of ſentiment and deciſion, ſhe came of a family of brothers and ſiſters who, in their way, were as exceptional as herſelf. One had been a chemiſt of repute, and had worked with Spallanzani; another had been a monk; a third, who was a miller, had been deeply verſed in the logic and literature of Port-Royal. One of her huſband's uncles, Charles Millet, a prieſt releaſed from his vows by the Revolution, was an almoſt ideal type of the working country curate; he was good, ſweet-tempered, thoughtful, prodigiouſly laborious, and gifted with enormous ſtrength; and

> "Criſte's lore and His Apoſtles twelve,
> He taught, and ferſt he folwed it himſelve."

Another Millet was a man of great hardihood and endurance, to whom it was paſtime to walk without ſtopping from Gruchy to Paris. Their nephew, the painter's father, was an excellent man; he was pure in thought, clean in life, very pious, and full of a certain cheerful ſerioufneſs of temper and of mind; and in his ſimple, inarticulate way he was an artiſt. He was paſſionately fond of muſic, and he was the precentor of Gruchy church, where he led and trained a choir that was the envy and admiration of all the country ſide. He would often try to model in clay, and to carve in wood with his pocket-knife; and he loved to point out to his ſon the beauty and charm he ſaw in the landſcape in whoſe midſt they dwelt, and to make him feel the wonder and the myſtery in the changing ſeaſons, in the ſpringing of wheat, in the branching majeſty of woods, in the quiet increaſe of graſs and

flowers. His wife, a Henry, or Henry du Perron, was one of a race of rich yeomen gone to decay. She was a good woman and a good mother. Her nature was not myſtical and imaginative like her mother-in-law's and her husband's, nor ardent and reſolute like that of the Millet brothers; but ſhe had plenty of intelligence, and ſhe was rich in ſentiment and the emotional capacity, as certain of her letters to her ſon atteſt. She bore her huſband nine children; one of them the greateſt painter of his epoch, while at leaſt two others appear to have been, in ſome degree, artiſts alſo. The eldeſt was a girl; the ſecond was the painter of the *Angelus* and of *Death and the Woodman.*

He was his grandmother's godſon, and he was chriſtened Jean, after his father, and François, after the Saint of Aſſiſi, his godmother's patron. It was under her care and guidance, and thoſe of his uncle, the Abbé Charles, that he was reared; and the dignified and laborious earneſtneſs of theſe governors of his was a chief influence in his life, and a diſtinguiſhing feature in his character. The Millet family led an exiſtence almoſt patriarchal in its unalterable ſimplicity and diligence; and the boy grew up in an environment of toil and ſincerity and devoutneſs. He was foſtered upon the Bible and the great book of nature. He dwelt between the eternal majeſty of the ſea and the ſolemn beauty of the wide champaign. From the firſt he was familiar with the ſpectacle of the generous ſtrife of man and the elements. When he woke, it was to the lowing of cattle and the ſong of birds; he was at play all day among "the ſights and ſounds of the open landſcape;" and he ſlept with the murmur of the ſpinning-wheel in his ears, and the memory of the evening prayer in his heart. In a little while he learned to read and write, and he was then able to ſearch the Scriptures for himſelf, and, in time, to ſtudy the men of Port-Royal. He learned Latin from the pariſh prieſt and from his uncle Charles; and he ſoon came to be a ſtudent of Virgil, who was one of his idols always, and who was as precious to him as he was to a man of a very different type—the muſician, Hector Berlioz. While

he was yet young in his teens he began to follow his father out into the fields; and thenceforward, as became the eldeſt boy in a large family, he worked hard at grafting and ploughing, ſowing and reaping, ſcything and ſhearing and planting, and all the many duties of huſbandmen. Meanwhile, he had taken to drawing, and his advance towards a certain ſort of proficiency appears to have been rapid in the extreme. The myſtery of foreſhortening was revealed to him by the ſight of a crooked old wayfarer, whom he followed home one day from maſs. He copied everything he ſaw, and he produced not only ſtudies, but compoſitions alſo; till at laſt his father was moved to take him from farming, and have him taught to be an artiſt at Cherbourg. The young man at once prepared a couple of drawings, to be ſhown, as proofs of his proficiency, to the painter whoſe advice it was propoſed to aſk. In one of theſe—a compoſition, of peaſants carrying bread, by a cottage, under a ſtarry ſky—he revealed himſelf as he was preſently to be; and he was wont to ſay in after life that it anticipated all his art, as Ingres was wont to ſay that the Ingres who, at thirteen, had copied and underſtood the *Madonna della Sedia* was the Ingres of the *Apothéoſe* and the *Saint-Symphorien.* The artiſt to whom theſe works were ſubmitted was a ſtrange, erratic creature, named Mouchel; and Mouchel, after refuſing to believe that they had been done by the young countryman he ſaw before him, conſented to receive their author as a pupil. The connexion thus formed laſted for two months only, during the whole of which time Millet did very much as he pleaſed, Mouchel refuſing to do more than adviſe him in his choice of pictures to copy, and vaguely indicate to him his miſtakes. Then came the death of the elder Millet, of brain fever (1836), and the return of the apprentice-painter to Gruchy.

He was ready and anxious to take his father's place as the family breadwinner and chief; but of this his mother and grandmother would not hear. The dead man had determined that his ſon ſhould be a painter, and to the two women neareſt him on earth the determination was ſacred. It was God's will, they ſaid, that their

lad ſhould be a great and famous man; and he muſt go back to Cherbourg forthwith. Back to Cherbourg he went accordingly. Certain notables of the place were intereſted in him, from ſeeing him at work in the picture-gallery, and in no great while he was introduced to the ſtudio of the local artiſt, one Langlois, a pupil of Gros, and a nobody of the firſt magnitude. Langlois did as little in the way of teaching for his new pupil as Mouchel had done before him. Millet appears to have perplexed and frightened his maſter a good deal. He was ſo utterly unlike the ordinary art-ſtudent, in all he ſaid and did, that Langlois knew not how to deal with him, and dealt with him as little as poſſible. The conſequence was that he was left to do very much as he would. He read voraciouſly, and he read well. He learned to know Hugo and Shakeſpeare and Byron; he became an adept in Scott and Goethe, in Béranger and Chateaubriand and Fennimore Cooper; he ſtudied Montaigne and Auguſtine, and Jerome and Paſcal; Paul de Kock was not too low for him, nor was Homer too high. In literature, however, as in painting, he had the heroic inſtinct and the heroic ſentiment, and he loved only the beſt and the ſtrongeſt. He was already well verſed in good authors when he came to Paris, ſome twelve or fourteen months after his return to Cherbourg, and the circle of his reading went on widening till the end of his life. Years afterwards he is found delighting in Burns and in François Hugo's tranſlation of Shakeſpeare, and ſtudying Theocritus, and even planning a verſion of certain idylls. Meanwhile, he worked hard, not only at his books, but at copying ſuch maſter-pictures as the town gallery contained; and he is known to have made ſtudies, among other painters, from Philippe de Champagne, Van Loo, Schedone, Van der Mol, and Jacob Jordaens. His copying and continual preſence in the gallery appear to have occaſioned conſiderable excitement, as thoſe who know the novels of Flaubert and Champfleury will readily believe; and he became a kind of local celebrity, ſo that, on Langlois' application and advice, the Municipal Council made no great difficulty in voting him a yearly allowance

of 400 francs, to enable him to purſue his ſtudies in Paris. This was ſoon afterwards ſupplemented by a ſtipend of 600 francs from the Council-General of the Department; ſo that when Millet left Gruchy for the capital, he was, to all appearance, in comfortable circumſtances enough. As a matter of fact, however, the annuity was not long continued, and while it laſted, was ſeldom or never paid until it had got a good while overdue.

II.

It was in the January of 1837—ſome fourteen or fifteen months after the father's death—that Millet, furniſhed with ſundry letters of introduction, and bound for the ſtudio of Paul Delaroche, arrived in Paris. His people had parted from him with tears and miſgivings; and he knew, as well as they did, that he had come to a terrible place, and one abounding in temptations and wickedneſs. But he had a few hundred francs in his pocket, and the treaſures of the Luxembourg and the Louvre were, at laſt, within his reach. And it is to be conjectured that he was tolerably happy, though he diſliked the city itſelf, and was not at all in ſympathy with the facts and circumſtances of his environment.

The Romantic movement was in the full tide of proſperity. The victory of *Hernani* was already ancient hiſtory. Hugo had written *Notre-Dame*, and moſt of his plays and many volumes of verſe. Muſſet had publiſhed *Rolla* and the *Nuits*. Balzac was the author of the *Père Goriot*, and the *Lys dans la Vallée*, and *Eugénie Grandet*; Gautier, of *Mdlle. de Maupin* and the *Comédie de la Mort*; George Sand, of *Léone Léoni* and *Jacques*, and a ſcore of wild and eloquent novels more. Delacroix had painted the *Hamlet*, the *Maſſacre de Scio*, the *Marino Faliero*, the *Bataille de Nancy*, the *Révolution de Juillet*, and many a famous picture beſides; and Corot, the Devérias, Ary Scheffer, Rouſſeau, Jules Dupré, Delaroche, and Camille Flers, were working their hardeſt and their beſt beſide

him. Berlioz was already the muſician of *Harold*, and the *Fantaſtique*, and *Benvenuto Cellini*. David d'Angers and Barye were doing excellent things in marble. The ſtage was triumphant in the preſence of Dorval and Frédérick and Bocage, and glorious in the dramas of Dumas. Evidently, it was not for lack of provocation and example that Millet, already prepared by a year of appropriate literature at Cherbourg, did not inſtantly become as egregious a Romanticiſt as the magnificent Gautier himſelf, and fall to ſmoking papelitos, and taking liquor out of ſkull-cups with the beſt of them. The truth is that he was the laſt in the world to be impreſſed with Romanticiſm, either practical or in theory. He had, in full meaſure, the virtues of ſincerity and ſtrength; his imagination was grandioſe and ſolemn in caſt and in kind; he had been reared upon the Scriptures, and he was familiar with heroic literature; he preferred dignity to effect, and truth to falſehood; his ambitions were lofty, and he took life very earneſtly and ſeriouſly. And from the freakiſhneſs and affectation of Romanticiſm, from its vulgarity and noiſineſs and trickery, he turned aſide, diſcontented and ſurpriſed. For the genius and accompliſhment of Delacroix he cheriſhed a life-long admiration, and he had a ſincere regard for what is good and honeſt in the work of Hugo. But the barrenneſs and inſincerity of painters like Boulanger, and Delaroche, and Scheffer, and Eugène Devéria, were painfully apparent to him; he diſliked the theatre, and thought its frequentation bad for the production of earneſt art; he was more deeply intereſted in Virgil and in Homer than in *Albertus* and *Mardoche*. With the pictures in the Luxembourg—thoſe of Eugène Delacroix alone excepted—he was bitterly diſappointed. He abandoned them inſtantly for thoſe in the Louvre, and there, among the Old Maſters, he found friends. Michelangelo and Pouſſin overwhelmed him with admiration and aſtoniſhment; their influence became at once the greateſt fact in his life. Next to theſe in his regard came the Pre-Raphaelite Maſters—Mantegna and Angelico and Filippo Lippi; he was faſcinated by them, they appealed directly to his

underſtanding and his emotion, and he was never weary of conſidering their work. Rembrandt he did not know till later on:—"Il ne me repouſſait pas, mais m'aveuglait," he ſays; "je penſais qu'il fallait faire des ſtations avant d'entrer dans le génie de cet homme." Velaſquez he admired diſcreetly; he liked Murillo in portraits, and Ribera in his *Centaurs* and his *Saint Bartholomew*; he was profoundly impreſſed by Titian and Giorgione; he cared little for Watteau; and as ſtrength and ſincerity were the objects of his purſuit, he would have given all Boucher for a ſingle one of Rubens' eſſays in the nude. He made no copies; he looked and pondered, and that was enough. He had come to Paris with his ideas in art "toutes faites," he ſays; and this ſtudy of method and ſentiment in the Old Maſters went on with him for many years. It was incomparably the greater, and the more important part of ſuch æſthetic education as he had; and he was himſelf the author of it.

Meanwhile, he had got early into difficulties, and had had an experience that would not be out of place in the blackeſt page in Balzac. He had been received into the houſe of a man for whom he had a letter of introduction from people in Cherbourg, and he had given all his money to his hoſteſs, to keep for him and dole out to him as it was needed. The lady fell in love with him, and finding that he did not, or would not, reſpond to her advances, confiſcated the whole depoſit, and left him pennileſs. He quitted the houſe at once, and, having found a garret to harbour in, entered on his work under Delaroche. With his fellow-ſtudents, among whom were Gendron, Couture, Edouard Frère, Yvon, and Hébert, he was far from being a favourite. They were ſcornfully amuſed with his ruſticity (they called him the "Wild Man of the Woods"), and with the original and unconventional way he had of doing things; and he had a very hearty diſlike for their boyiſh wit and levity, and declined to intereſt himſelf in their paſtimes or to admire their habits of thought or their way of life. In addition, he was ſuſpicious of reſtraint, he had a poor opinion of his maſter's talent

and accompliſhment, and he thought nothing of the proceſs of education that obtained in the *atelier*. Delaroche, who was a pompous and theatrical perſon, ſeems, for his part, to have regarded Millet with a curious mixture of intereſt and repulſion. He recognized the young man's power and promiſe, but he did very little more; and it was not long ere they parted company. Millet had determined to compete for the *Prix de Rome*, and to that end had finiſhed and ſent in his drawing. Delaroche looked at it, and was much impreſſed by it. He had decided, however, that his repreſentative was to be a favourite pupil of his, an inſignificant lad named Roux; and of this he informed the Wild Man of the Woods without delay, promiſing, if he would withdraw his deſign, to put him forward for the prize next year. Millet replied by leaving the *atelier*. He drew from the model at a ſchool kept by a maſter named Suiſſe; and with a friend of his, a certain Marolle, he took a little ſtudio for himſelf. Here he painted portraits at five francs apiece, and produced ſham Watteaus and Bouchers, which Marolle took round to the dealers, and ſold—when he ſold them at all—at the buyer's own prices. In the intervals of production Millet read hard at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, where he aſſimilated all he could get—drawings, letters, treatiſes, engravings—of the work of Durer, Jean Couſin, Leonardo, Pouſſin, and Michelangelo, the two laſt eſpecially. In 1840 he ſent in a couple of portraits for exhibition at the Salon, and one, the worſt, was accepted. This ſcrap of encouragement notwithſtanding, the poſition ſeemed to him, for the moment at leaſt, no longer tenable. There were no more portraits to paint, and the dealers were tired of Watteau and Boucher. There was nothing for it but to go back to Cherbourg, and try for work there; and this, accordingly, Millet did.

In Cherbourg, Millet got inſtantly into hot water with the Municipal Council, over a commiſſion for the portrait of a prominent citizen (lately deceaſed) whom he had never ſeen, and of whom he could get no ſort of likeneſs ſave one taken thirty or forty years before. As was to be expected, the picture was voted a failure, and

the Council declared its bargain off, and refuſed to pay. After that, Millet lived for ſome time by painting cheap portraits and ſigns. Then, in the November of 1841, he married his firſt wife, Pauline Ono, and early in the ſpring of the next year he returned to Paris. There the life he lived was a harder one than ever. Either his pictures were abuſed, or they paſſed unnoticed; he had a ſick wife to keep (ſhe died, childleſs, in 1844, after two years and five months of marriage), and if he ſold at all, it was for a few francs only, which were often difficult to get; and he could barely find himſelf in bread and colours. In 1844, he exhibited a paſtel good enough to attract the attention of Diaz, and betook himſelf to Cherbourg once more. He had learned to paint very prettily and well, the journals had ſpoken of his paſtel, and he had no difficulty in getting commiſſions. He produced a number of portraits—rich in tone, harmonious and charming in tint, brilliant and gallant in handling, ingenious and flowery and mannered in ſtyle, the antipodes of his later and more perſonal work—and ſome few pictures; and he refuſed a place as drawing-maſter at Cherbourg School. Late in the year 1845, he married Catherine Lemaire, a peaſant like himſelf, the mother of his nine children, and his faithful and devoted friend and companion for thirty years; and the pair proceeded to Havre, on their way to Paris. There they remained for ſeveral weeks, during which time Millet made many admirers, and became almoſt popular. He produced ſome Bouchers, ſome portraits, and ſome eſſays in mythology and the paſtoral; an exhibition of his works was opened; and he came on to Paris upwards of 900 francs the richer for his ſtay. It was the firſt and only glimpſe of popularity he ever ſaw.

Millet lived for the next four years in Paris. This was his laſt ſojourn in the capital, and there was ſcarcely a form of hardſhip or a variety of diſappointment it did not entail upon him. If he ſold at all, it was for the meaneſt prices; he was badly hung at the exhibitions, and ſnubbed, or paſſed over, by moſt of the critics; turn which way he would, he was encountered with rejection and diſdain; oftentimes he

was pennileſs, and once his wife and he did not ſo much as break bread for forty-eight hours. It was a time, however, of effort and of meditation, and ere the end of it the great painter had completed his education, and fixed upon his path in art. Michelangelo diſcloſed to him the myſtery of geſture and expreſſion, and taught him to inform his work with heroic and emotional meanings. From Nicolas Pouſſin he learned the ſecret of ſtyle: the true worth and ſignificance of dignity in deſign, of breadth and ſymmetry in compoſition, of nobility in conception, of reticence and grandeur in execution. Finally, he ſtudied and maſtered the art of modelling in the work of Correggio; and in the portraiture of the human body—in the arrangement and apprehenſion of the tints and tones of living fleſh, and the preſentment of its aſpects and its eſſentials—he became excellent enough to be almoſt notorious. He was naturally ſenſuous in habit; with his admirable phyſique, his ſplendid conſtitution, and his exuberant vigour of temperament, it would have been ſtrange had he been otherwiſe. And as he was a born colouriſt withal, and a man who, even had he had nothing to expreſs, would ſtill have gone on painting, with a ſtrong ſenſe of phyſical delight in the proceſs and its effects, it is not at all aſtoniſhing that his achievements about this time ſhould have been mainly compoſed of ſtudies in the nude. Artiſts called him "le maître du nu;" and as this kind of work was intereſting to do, and more eaſily ſold than work of another order, he did much of it. He would no doubt have done more, but that he chanced to overhear a converſation between two men who were ſtaring at one of his pictures in a ſhop-window, when he learned that he was generally ſuppoſed to be able to do nothing elſe. Thereupon, with his wife's complete approbation, he determined rather to go hungry than incur ſuch a reproach again. To this determination he adhered with much conſtancy, both at the time and afterwards, though he was ſometimes reduced to bartering pictures for clothes and bread, and to getting rid of his ſketches at prices ranging from a franc to five francs each, and though he once lived for a whole fortnight on the ſum of thirty francs, which he had earned by

painting a ſign for a monthly nurſe; and with the ſingle exception of the figures in a decorative panel executed years after for a rich man's new houſe, he painted nudities no more. At the moment his reſolve was made, it was all the more eaſily maintained, inaſmuch as his æſthetic ideas had for ſome time paſt been tending towards expreſſion in another and a very different form. This tendency was firſt revealed in a picture of a man winnowing (*Le Vanneur*, 1848) and another of a *Payſanne Aſſiſe* (1849), both of them tranſcripts from ruſtic reality, and neither of them very poſitively ſucceſſful; and it preſently aſſerted itſelf further in the production of a number of ſketches and ſtudies from life and character in the ſtreets and the ſuburban fields and villages. The Revolution came, and went, but Millet took no heed of it; he diſliked politics, and he was abſorbed in the contemplation of his idea. He fell ill of rheumatiſm in the joints, and ſuffered acutely; but illneſs no more turned him from his purſuit than revolution. About the ſame time, Ledru-Rollin bought the *Vanneur* for 500 francs, and commiſſioned him to paint, for 1800 francs, a picture for the State. To this end he began by producing a *Hagar and Iſhmael*, life-ſize, or larger. But the picture did not pleaſe him, and was, beſides, another eſſay in the nude; and in its ſtead he ſet himſelf to paint a ſcene from the life he knew, and, with infinite pains and difficulty, produced his *Faneurs et Faneuſes*—a band of haymakers reſting from the noontide heat, among haycocks, under the ſtrong ſunſhine and the vivid ſky of a French midſummer. It was his laſt achievement in Paris. Cholera was rife there, and the Republic had paid him for his work; ſo he took his wife and children away to the little inn at Barbizon, a village in the great Fontainebleau foreſt, already famous in the annals of French art, and deſtined, in connexion with Millet, and with Théodore Rouſſeau, whom he met there for the firſt time, and who remained his friend and champion and neighbour till the end, to become a place of diſtinct hiſtorical intereſt and importance.

Barbizon had ſeemed to Millet a pleaſant ſpot in which to keep holiday for a month or two, till the ſummer heats ſhould be ſpent,

and he and his could return to Paris. But he never left it again, ſo that his holiday viſit was one that laſted full ſeven and twenty years.

III.

The plain of Barbizon, and the noble foreſt, impreſſed him greatly, and for ſome time, with the wonder and excitement, he was like a man drunken. Fifty years before, the place had ſeemed intereſting to Obermann himſelf, archetype of moral and intellectual futility as he was; and to Millet, who ſaw it with other eyes and to far other ends, it was a revelation of heroic facts, and even more heroic poſſibilities. "C'eſt d'un calme, d'une grandeur épouvantables," he wrote of the foreſt, later on; "au point que je me ſurprends ayant véritablement peur. . . . J'y cours quelquefois—et j'en reviens chaque fois écraſé." He could do nothing but look and dream. Then a change came over the ſpirit of his worſhip. He ſet to work making ſtudies and noting his impreſſions — finding the days no more than five minutes long—and conveying to canvas every circumſtance in the nature of his new environment, whether animate or inanimate, until he had made the whole neighbourhood his own, from the ſtrange wilderneſs of the Reine-Blanche to the ſwarded ſlopes of the Bois-d'Hiver, from the dead town of Chailly-en-Bière to the moated grange of Fleury. He painted the brackens and the huge, immemorial rocks, the ſecular beeches and oaks, the big pines and airy birches, the glades and long avenues, the ſolemn ſkies and vaſty diſtances, water and herbage and cloud, waſte land and ploughed land and meadow. And he alſo painted, and painted as he found them, the men and women about him: ſawing wood and binding faggots; ploughing and reaping and ſowing; planting and delving; keeping ſheep and herding cattle, and driving geeſe and leading horſes; beating clothes in the ſtream, and carrying water from the wells, and cutting timber in the foreſt glades; renewing and ſtrengthening the impreſſions of his younger years, and accumulating a ſtore of facts and truths for

future ſervice and the realization of his ideal. Soon, with the aid of his new experience, he began to deſign and to compoſe; and, after producing a number of drawings and paſtels, he exhibited, in the Salon of 1850, his magnificent *Sower*, a reminiſcence of Gruchy, the firſt of his great and repreſentative pictures, and his firſt announcement in appropriate terms of the new departure taken by his genius.

The *Sower*, which was accompanied by the *Haybinders*, attracted ſome little attention; and Théophile Gautier, who was deſtined afterwards to make himſelf unpleaſantly conſpicuous by the high-handed ignorance he diſplayed in his dealings with Millet, deigned to find great merit in the work, and ſpoke warmly in its praiſe. The picture of the year, however, was Courbet's powerful and uncommon *Enterrement d'Ornans*, which created a ſenſation, and left the public indifferent to everything beſides; ſo that the effect produced by the *Sower* and the *Haybinders* was neither deep nor laſting. Millet had revealed himſelf, and the revelation had delighted his friends, and aſtoniſhed a few painters; and that was all. Still, his feet were in the right way, and his hand was ſet to the right work; and he went on as he had begun. In ſucceſſion, at varying intervals, he produced his *Four Seasons*, his *Sewing Girls*, and his *Man Manuring;* his *Ruth and Boaz* and his *Shepherd*, which won him a ſecond-claſs medal; his *Grafter* (1855), which Gautier called "painted Georgics," and which Rouſſeau bought for 4000 francs; his myſterious and wonderful *Shepherd at the Fold;* his *Gathering Sticks in the Forest*, and his admirable *Departure for the Fields;* his incomparable *Angelus;* his *Gleaners*, a masterpiece of majeſty and beauty; and his grandiose and pathetic *Expectation*, a heroic expreſſion of the pathos of hope deferred and the dignity of ſorrowing old age. Theſe achievements of genius to the contrary, the painter remained as poor as ever. He owed his butcher and his grocer; he was expoſed to endleſs worry and annoyance from writs and executions; he is found writing to Senſier—as Maſſinger and his jail-mates to their manager—for advances and loans in ſhillings. Firſt his grandmother died, then his mother; and for neither death-bed was he able to raiſe the money that would have taken

him from Barbizon to Gruchy. He was not more ſucceſſful in his art than he was unſucceſſful with the public and the critics. The *Gleaners* ſerved as a whetſtone for the mannered inſolence of M. Paul de Saint-Victor; the *Angelus* went begging for buyers, and was finally ſold for 2000 francs; and in 1859 the famous picture, *Le Bûcheron et la Mort*, one of the most powerful and imaginative works in the whole range of modern art, was refuſed admiſſion to the Salon, and had to be exhibited in a private gallery. It is not to be wondered at if Millet were often the prey of a "profond embêtement," and if now and then his thoughts found vent in the ſhape of pictures of ſuicide.

It ſeems certain that theſe croſſes and troubles reſulted in the breaking up of Millet's health and the ſhortening of his life. But not for an inſtant did they cauſe him to doubt of himſelf, or to modify in any way his theory of art. On the contrary, his work grew more eminently individual, became more charged with meaning, more profoundly emotional and impreſſive, with each ſucceſſive repulſe. They might talk of uglineſs who would. To him beauty was identical with expreſſion; the Beautiful was no other than the Congruous. His ideas once found, he did his utmoſt to convey them in forms that ſhould be inſtinct with actual ſentiment and the peculiar paſſion. In 1860 he mortgaged away his induſtry, for three years, for an annuity of 12,000 francs; and he took advantage of the quiet thus introduced into his affairs to plan, or finiſh, some of his greateſt pictures. Among theſe mention may be made of the *Crows*, the *Woman Shearing*, the *Gooſe-Girl*, the *Potato-Planters*, the *Potato Harveſt*, the *Shepherd at the Fold by Moonlight*, and the *Sheep-Shearing*; and there were other maſter-works beſides. To the bitter criticiſm provoked by his *Expectation*, Millet replied by producing his terrible *Man Hoeing* (*L'Homme à la Houe*) (1863), a commentary on a famous paſſage in La Bruyère, that got him—fooliſhly enough—the name and fame of an anarchiſt in politics and a ſocialiſt in religion. This, in its turn, came in for an infinite deal of abuſe; but all that Millet did was to challenge his "éternels aboyeurs," as he called the

critics, to further violence by aſking their opinion (1864) of his noble *Shepherdeſs* and his *New-Born Calf*. In 1867, eight of his moſt important pictures were exhibited in the Expoſition Univerſelle, and he ſent his *Gooſe-Girl* and his admirable *Winter* to the Salon. Next year he received the red riband of the Legion; and in 1876 he exhibited his *Churning Butter* and his *November*, and was, for the firſt time in his life, elected of the Jury. The Franco-Pruſſian War found him failing in health, and as lean of purſe as ever. His pictures ſold for ſuch trifling ſums as would nowadays be ſcorned by a ſecond-year's exhibitor, and his income was mainly derived from the ſale of his drawings and paſtels, of which he executed upwards of ninety-five for a ſingle dealer, a certain Gavet. At Gruchy and at Cherbourg, whither he retreated before the advance of the German armies, he ſketched and painted much, producing ſome aſtoniſhing work in the way of landſcape and coaſt ſcenery; and after his return to Barbizon he painted his portentous and myſterious *Turkey Farm*, his extraordinary and affecting *Vine-dreſſer Reſting*, and his four pictures of the four ſeaſons, chief among them the magnificent *Autumn* (*Les Meules*). For Millet, too, the times now ſeemed to be changing. Certain pictures of his ſold for exceptionally high prices at public ſales. M. de Chennevières commiſſioned him to decorate the Church of Sainte-Geneviève, and fixed his charge for him at 50,000 francs. He was growing in repute, and his work was beginning to be held at ſomething like its true worth. It looked as if there were poſſibilities of fortune for him yet.

It was all too late, however. Trouble, inceſſant hard work, intenſe application, the prodigious amount of mental effort which Millet was wont to expend upon his pictures, had impaired a conſtitution of exceptional ſtrength, and exhauſted a brain of exceptional force. Early in 1875 the great painter died. He had been ailing ſeriouſly for ſome time, and he knew that there was no hope for him. Deep and earneſt as was his piety, he was grieved to the heart that death had come ſo ſoon; he was, he ſaid, but juſt beginning to ſee clearly into nature and art. Beethoven and he were of one family

as artiſts; and we may remember that Beethoven, as he lay dying, felt as if he had ſcarcely written more than a few notes.

It is almoſt ſuperfluous to add that Millet became a great painter as ſoon as ever he was dead. The ſale of his drawings, ſketches, and unfiniſhed pictures brought in ſome 320,000 francs; while the ninety-five paſtels and deſigns he had executed for Gavet realized, among twenty buyers, upwards of 430,000 francs. Of late years, as much as £20 has been aſked for a proof of his noble etching, *The Gleaners*, which not ſo very long ago was worth no more than half-a-franc at the moſt. The *Grafter* has riſen in price from 1000 francs to upwards of £5300, the *Angelus* from 2000 francs to £8000; £5000 is aſked for the *Sower;* and to acquire even a ſmall canvaſs ſigned "Millet" under £600 or £800 is impoſſible. It is pitiful to think that, in itſelf, the man's work was juſt as valuable while he lived as it is now he is dead, and to reflect that, from the worldly point of view, he lived and wrought and ſuffered to the end that here and there a picture-dealer might make ſome money.

IV.

It was the function of art, as underſtood and practiſed by the Old Maſters, to treat the human figure as the one thing in nature of paramount and heroic intereſt, and, regarding all elſe as of ſecondary importance and ſignificance, to dignify and ennoble this central theme by imparting to it all that imagination, and accompliſhment, and individuality could beſtow. Landſcape was an acceſſory; atmoſphere was a thing for every painter to invent according to the neceſſities of his picture; light and ſhadow were more or leſs arbitrary and conventional. The intereſt of a compoſition, its central and heroic human elements apart, was not an intereſt of truth and nature, but one of perſonal invention and decorative deſign, of harmonious juxtapoſitions of tint and impreſſive eſſays in tone, of the ſymmetrical ordering of lines and the peculiarities and perfections of technical ſkill. It was to this end that the Old Maſters

planned and wrought, exhauſting the æſthetic poſſibilities of the figure in the ſenſe in which they apprehended them, and impoſing on their ſucceſſors the neceſſity of inventing new views and new ambitions for themſelves, with the alternative, if they ſhould fail, of having perforce, however excellent their achievement, to be merely imitative in aim and unoriginal in fact. So far as we yet know, there remained but one thing for modern art to do, and that was to deal with humanity, not as the only important thing in nature, but as one part in a complex whole, an actor in a great and diverſified theatre, and to eſſay its preſentment, not as abſtracted from the truth of its environment, but as influencing and influenced by the appearances of all co-related and co-exiſting things. The Dutchmen of the Seventeenth Century took the lead in this undertaking. They were the firſt to exhibit the aſpects of human beings in ſtrict relation to their natural ſurroundings, to aſſign to furniture and landſcape, and above all to the ſubtleties and gradations of indoor and outdoor atmoſphere, their due place and importance in the pictorial drama. In this endeavour the Dutch School has been followed by all the vital forces of modern painting; it is indeed on the ſtrength of this endeavour that modern painting may be ſaid to exiſt in its own right, and to be employed in the exerciſe of an original and appropriate function. Modern painters have aſſimilated much from their predeceſſors, but they have created largely on their own account as well; and, ſighted and determined by themſelves, they have for the chief objects of their purſuit the perſonal and imaginative expreſſion of truth in all its conſtituents, and the achievement of an even and perfect balance between their ſubject and its environment. Millet's pre-eminency as an artiſt is due to the fact that his work is the moſt complete and authoritative expoſition of theſe new principles, eſpecially as underſtood ſince Conſtable and his freſh departure towards ideal naturaliſm in landſcape, that has as yet been uttered.

He was the painter of man in nature. He treated of ſky and ſea, of the ſoil and its fruits, of human kind and animals, of the night-

time and the day, with equal power and ſkill, and equal regard and underſtanding; and his art is the complete expreſſion of a certain type of human life, and a certain order in human deſtiny. He was a great colouriſt, a great draughtſman, and a great artiſt in compoſition; he was a perfect maſter of the claſſic formula, and he applied his graſp of claſſic principles to the development of the modern idea; he was gifted with an imagination of heroic loftineſs and ſtrength, and with a wonderfully rich and potent individuality; and his work, from the *Sower* downwards, is one long teſtimony to the nobility of his ambition and the epic quality of his purpoſe.

"Je vis bien," he wrote of a drawing of Michelangelo's in the collection at the Louvre, "que celui qui avait fait cela était capable, avec une ſeule figure, de perſonnifier le bien et le mal de l'humanité." The reflection is exactly deſcriptive, on a narrower ſcale, of the nature of his own capacity and of the object of his own endeavour. He ſet himſelf to do for a claſs that which he held that Michelangelo could have done for the race. He was a peaſant himſelf, and an outcome of many generations of peaſants; his memory and his mind were quick with ruſtic experiences, and with ſympathy for ruſticity; and he did well when he made the eternal conteſt between man and nature the theme of his epic, and choſe the champions on either ſide for his only heroes. To the things he touched with intention, he had it in him to impart a character grandioſe and majeſtic—a note of fatefulneſs, a ſenſe of large iſſues, a ſhadow of romance, a ſentiment of myſtery, an attribute of paſſionate ſolemnity—which lifts them into the regions of heroic poetry, and makes them no longer accidental and individual, but repreſentative and abſolute. "Il faut pouvoir faire ſervir le trivial à l'expreſſion du ſublime," he ſaid on one occaſion; "Il faut percevoir l'infini," on another; and theſe two utterances, as they explain his ambition, may be held to deſcribe his achievement alſo. He catches truth in the act: like Wordſworth, when he puts all human romance into a couple of verſes,—

> "For old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago;"

when he tells of the tall cataract haunting him like a paſſion, and diſcerns the beauty that is born of murmuring ſound. He expreſſes the ſpirit of a calling in a geſture or an attitude. From his hill-ſides and his darkling expanſes of plain he ſpeaks with the very voice of the ground. In a ſolitary figure he reſumes and typifies the fortunes of a hundred generations of patient toil. He is a Michelangelo of the glebe; and his ſhepherds and his herdwomen are akin in dignity and grandeur to the prophets and ſibyls of the Siſtine freſcoes.

He was chary of details, and it may be said of his acceſſories that they were all eſſentials. He was not content with mere aſpects of things; he purſued their primary and innate ſignificance as well. In the *Angelus* he ſought, as he has told us, to interfuſe his atmoſphere with the ſound of the veſper bell. His three Gleaners are in very deed "the Parcæ of poverty." His Death, in *Le Bûcheron et la Mort* is auguſt and irreſiſtible, like the fact. His Sower toils afield with the port and geſture of the Firſt Huſbandman. His reſting Labourer, in *Le Vigneron au Repos*, is a laſt expreſſion of heat and wearineſs. Of gaiety and frolic he perceived but little in the world. He had the deep-thoughted ſadneſs of thoſe whoſe lot it is to commune much and alone with nature. When he looked upon life, he ſaw it full of meanings that were often pathetic, and always grave and ſerious; and the influence of his art is altogether elevating and ennobling. His greater pictures may be likened, in a ſenſe, to the adagios of Beethoven. They are full of melancholy and of myſtery; but their effect is both to hearten and inſpire, for they are felt to be great art, and the outcome of an heroic mind and ſoul.

W. E. H.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

I.

Carding.

Frontiſpiece.

From a very characteriſtic etching, *La Cardeuſe.* The plate is unſigned. It was ſpoiled in the biting-in, the artiſt having forgotten it in the bath, where it lay for a whole night. It was not publiſhed until after Millet's death.

The theme is a woman carding wool. She has on a ſleeveleſs bodice, a linen cap, a neck-handkerchief, and a coarſe woollen apron; her arms are in knitted ſleeves, and her feet in ſabots; ſhe reſts the wool on her knee with her left hand, and works the carding-comb with her right. At her left foot is a baſket of wool already carded, and at her right another baſket, bottom upwards, with rolls of wool on it. In the background is a locker with a pair of ſcales; and to the left, behind the worker's heavy and clumſy-looking chair, are ſeen the nave and ſpokes of a great ſpinning-wheel.

At the Millet sale a *Cardeuſe de Laine* went for 2000 francs; a *Cardeuſes* for 4600.

II.

Starting for Work.

This is a reproduction, in facsimile, of one of Millet's finest etchings, *Le Départ Pour le Travail*, itself a variant, on copper, of the *Payfan et Payfanne Allant Travailler Dans Les Champs*, a picture dating from the early days of the painter's fojourn at Barbizon, and one of the firft in time of his "painted Georgics" after the *Sower* (1850).

The time is early morning; the fcene, the plain of Barbizon, with the houfes of the village, feen from the rear, in the background. In the middle diftance, to the left, is a plough, toward which, from the right, a labourer is riding his team. In the foreground are a young man and a girl, going afield through the frefh, brifk funfhine and the happy morning air: fhe, in her fhort petticoats and fabots, with a kind of grey-beard or ftone runlet in one hand, and in the other the handle of the bafket with which fhe is bonneted; he, in his blue bloufe and tight troufers, with wooden fhoes and a ftraw hat, and with a fork over his fhoulder and a hand in his pocket.

It is a charming compofition, full of light and air and the fenfe of motion, and touched with a certain frank and pleafant cheerfulnefs, which is a quality rare in Millet's work.

A drawing, *Le Départ pour le Travail*, in the Gavet collection, fold for 4500 francs.

STARTING FOR WORK.

(*Le Départ pour le Travail.*)

III.

Gleaning.

A reproduction, in facſimile, of the artiſt's own etching, *Les Glaneuſes*, from the famous picture (1857).

The ſcene is a corn-field, in the flat country about Barbizon. In the background, a ſtudy of harveſt : with wheat in ricks and in ſheaves, and hovering birds in flocks, and a loading wain, and the farmer riding among his reapers. To the right, remote among trees, the farm. In the foreground, among the criſp, new ſtubble, in the full blaze of the implacable ſunſhine, the three Gleaners —an old woman and two young ones. The eldeſt of the band is but ſlightly ſtooped, as if ſhe were ſtiff and unable, and her work were painful and hard. The others are toiling valiantly.

The etching is the author's beſt, and alſo one of the beſt of theſe times. The majeſtic beauty of the landſcape, the brilliant atmoſphere, the dignity and energy, the pathos and the myſtery expreſſed in the three heroic figures, are not to be paralleled in modern graving.

GLEANING.

(*Les Glaneuses.*)

IV.

Delving.

A facſimile; from the etching, *Les Bêcheurs*. This excellent work exiſts in four ſeveral ſtates, and may be regarded as one of the maſter's moſt finiſhed and careful eſſays.

The ſcene is again the flat about Barbizon: this time, on a piece of waſte land, which runs indifferently into rolling hillock and rough level. In the extreme diſtance, vaguely ſeen, are trees and the roofs of a remote village. In the foreground are two men digging. They are in their ſhirt-ſleeves, bare-headed and bare-breaſted, and with their braces looping about their legs. The elder and nearer thruſts in his ſpade, laborioufly and ſtrenuouſly; ſetting his whole body to the ſtroke, as if the effort were too much for him. The younger, altogether at his eaſe, and ſuperior to his taſk, is emptying his blade of clods juſt turned; his action is large and free, and it is evident that to him endeavour comes eaſily. Their hats and blouſes lie on the ground hard by.

The ſubject appears to have intereſted Millet very deeply, for he has often dealt with it. It is rich in opportunity of the portraiture of geſture; and geſture—the ſentiment of motion, the proceſs of action—is one of the moſt ſtriking features in his work.

DELVING.

(*Les Bêcheurs.*)

V.

Knitting.

From the admirable etching, *La Grande Bergère*, which—like *Les Bêcheurs*—exiſts in four ſtates, and is therefore to be conſidered as a carefully wrought and highly finiſhed work.

The ſhepherd's calling had a peculiar attraction for Millet. Its character and ſentiment came home to him very ſtrongly indeed. His imagination was faſcinated by its qualities and eſſentials—the ſolemn lonelineſs, the meditativeneſs, the calm, the conſtant and inevitable aſſociation with nature; and he was never weary of painting at it. He loved and underſtood the ſheep, too, as well as the ſhepherd; and with ſheep afield and in the fold, by night and by day, going forth in ſearch of paſturage at dawn and wending their homeward way through the evening twilight, at lambing-time and at ſhearing, he has ſet forth his idea of ſhepherding and its charges and duties in a ſeries of paſtorals of incomparable power and charm, and informed with a large and ſimple majeſty—a Biblical feeling, as it were—that makes them doubly beautiful and impreſſive.

The ſhepherdeſs of the illuſtration is reſting againſt a low mound, overgrown with ſaplings. Her ſtaff is beſide her. Her dog, a myſterious and fantaſtic creature—the Genius of the Fold—is watching hard by the ſheep that are nibbling about the ſunlit plain. Her head is dreſſed in a handkerchief; ſhe wears ſabots and ſhort petticoats, and is wrapped in a great cloak, with a hood ſwung back over her ſhoulder; and ſhe is knitting ſtockings bravely. In the background are the roofs and gables of a village. But the feeling of the compoſition is one of ſtillneſs and heat and ſolitude, and the pathos of an unalterable patience.

KNITTING.

(*La grande Bergère.*)

VI.

Hauling.

From the etching, *Payfan Rentrant du Fumier.*

A labourer, in a ſtraw hat and a knitted waiſtcoat, is barrowing a load of manure through a gateway opening from the yard into the orchard. In the background is a well, shaded with ſhrubs and pendant boughs. Beyond the orchard gate are bee-hives ; fruit-trees dip and bend over the orchard wall ; and over everything is the fenſe of a hot, ſtill, drowſy ſummer afternoon.

HAULING.

(*Paysan rentrant du Fumier.*)

VII.

Churning.

From the charming etching, *La Femme Qui Bat du Beurre:* a ſubject very dear to Millet, and very often treated by him.

In a cool dairy, with ſhelves full of butter-pots on the left hand, and a rough bench piled with ſacks againſt the farther wall, a robuſt and comely *fermière* is butter-making, in a primitive kind of old-faſhioned churn. She has a plain linen cap; her arms are bare to the elbows; her great apron falls to her ſabots; and her cat, his tail waving like a flag, is expreſſing a general approval of things by rubbing himſelf againſt her petticoats.

A *Batteuſe de Beurre* in the Gavet collection ſold for 5500 francs.

CHURNING.

(*La Femme qui bat du Beurre.*)

VIII.

Sewing.

From the etching, *La Couſeuſe;* exiſting in one ſtate only.

A cottage interior; a couple of irons on the wall, and beneath them a dreſſer, with a baſket. To the right, a latticed window, with linen on the ſill, and a pincuſhion. A woman ſitting at her needle, her work on her knee, and her ſabots ſhowing from underneath her petticoats.

Women at needlework were another of Millet's favourite themes. His drawings and paſtels and paintings of them are many.

SEWING.

(*La Couseuse.*)

IX.

Shepherding.

From *La Bergère;* a woodcut in the antique ſtyle, drawn by Millet and engraved by his brother, Jean-Baptiſte.

In an undulating and deſolate landſcape, with a couple of trees in the far diſtance, a young ſhepherdeſs, in a linen cap and a great hooded cloak, is paſturing her ſheep. She is ſeated on a little mound, holding her heavy ſtaff, as a ſupport, between her boſom and the ſoil with one hand, and ſteadying herſelf in her ſeat with the other. Her face and attitude expreſs a patient reſignation. The effect of ſolitude conveyed in the deſign is very ſtriking indeed.

SHEPHERDING.

(*La Bergère.*)

X.

Drawing Water.

From a woodcut, alſo in the antique ſtyle—the *Femme Vidant un Seau*. It is a replica of one of two deſigns, heliographed on glaſs by Millet, according to a method which was firſt ſuggeſted to him by his father; and it was drawn on the block to be cut by his brother, Pierre, as a ſtudy in engraving.

The ſcene is a kind of yard. A woman is filling two Norman milking-pails—they are made of braſs, and are called *cannes*—from a bucket, borrowed, as may be ſeen from the empty chain, from the domed and covered well behind her. To left of the *cannes* is a puddle. In the background is a low wall with a doorway; and beyond, there is a flight of ſtone ſteps leading up to a cottage.

Akin to the preſent illuſtration is the famous picture, *La Femme Qui Porte des Seaux*. Millet's account of his intention in this work is characteriſtic and ſignificant in a very marked degree. "J'ai tâché," he ſays, "de faire que ce ne ſoit ni une porteuſe d'eau, ni même une ſervante, mais la femme qui vient de puiſer l'eau pour l'uſage de ſa maiſon, l'eau pour faire la ſoupe à ſon mari et à ſes enfants; qu'elle ait bien l'air d'en porter ni plus ni moins lourd que le poids des ſeaux pleins; qu'au travers l'eſpèce de grimace qui eſt comme forcée à cauſe du poids qui lui tire ſur les bras, et du clignement d'yeux que lui fait faire la lumière, on devine ſur ſon viſage un air de ruſtique bonté. J'ai évité (comme toujours) avec une eſpèce d'horreur, ce qui pourrait regarder vers le ſentimental: j'ai voulu, au contraire, qu'elle accompliſſe avec ſimplicité et bonhomie, et ſans le conſidérer comme une corvée, un acte qui eſt, avec les autres travaux du ménage, un travail de tous les jours et l'habitude de ſa vie. Je voudrais auſſi qu'on imagine la fraîcheur du puits, et que ſon air d'ancienneté faſſe bien voir que beaucoup avant elle y ſont venus puiſer de l'eau." It is a part of his theory of art, he adds, that things ſhould never look as if "amalgamées au haſard et pour l'occaſion, mais qu'elles aient entre elles une liaiſon indiſpenſable et forcée;" and that his perſonages "aient l'air voués à leur poſition, et qu'il ſoit impoſſible d'imaginer qu'il leur puiſſe venir à l'idée d'être autre chose."

It will be ſeen that Millet worked hard for his effects, and that his genius, ſplendidly imaginative as it was, and comprehending the world of ſentiment and emotion that it did, was ſomething of "an infinite capacity for taking pains" as well.

At the Hartmann Sale (May, 1881) a *Femme Venant de Puiſer de l'Eau*—in all probability the picture referred to in this quotation—brought upwards of 78,000 francs.

DRAWING WATER.

(Femme vidant un Seau.)

XI.

Mowing.

From a woodcut, *La Faucheur.*

A peaſant ſcything graſs. He is in his ſhirt-ſleeves; his whetſtone is ſtuck into his waiſtband, and his feet are naked in his ſabots; he wears a broad-brimmed ſtraw hat. In the diſtance are other mowers, and ſome haycocks. There is a blaze of ſunſhine, and the time of day is evidently "the deep mid-noon."

This illuſtration is one of a ſeries of ten, *Les Travaux des Champs*, drawn by the maſter on wood, and engraved by Adrien Lavieille. They were firſt publiſhed in the *Illuſtration*, for February 7th, 1853; but they were afterwards (1855) reiſſued, as a ſeparate publication, by Lavieille, carefully printed on ſuperior paper, and called *Deſſins de J.-F. Millet.* They date from the early days at Barbizon, and may be referred to that period of ſtudy and contemplation which followed the fury of wonder and excitement into which the great painter was thrown by the ſight of the foreſt and the neighbouring plain.

The *Travaux des Champs* ſeries is completed by the nine illuſtrations that follow.

MOWING.

(*Le Faucheur.*)

XII.

Raking.

From the ſecond of the *Travaux des Champs*, the woodcut called *La Râteleuſe*.

The ſcene is ſtill the hayfield. The hay has been tedded, and is being raked and forked into cocks. The heroine plies her long wooden rake in mid-meadow, wearing a great hood to fence her eyes and her nape from the ſcorching ſunſhine.

RAKING.

(*La Rateleuse.*)

XIII.

Trussing.

From *Le Botteleur;* in *Les Travaux des Champs.*

In the full blaze of noontide, a peafant is binding hay into truffes. A background of ricks, with an *échappée* acrofs the meadow to a remote horizon. Half buried in a hay-cock in the middle diftance, a rake and a hay-fork.

The geflure of the figure is expreffive enough to make defcription unneceffary.

TRUSSING.

(*Le Botteleur.*)

XIV.

Reaping.

Otherwiſe, *Le Scieur de Blé.*

The reaper, bareheaded and in his ſhirt-ſleeves, his braces looping loofely about his thighs, is plying his hook among the ſtanding corn. The ſunſhine lies broad and white about him; the wheat is breaſt high, and ſhuts him in, like a wall and the ſky is full of birds, marauding after the ripe grain.

REAPING.

(*Le Scieur de Blé.*)

XV.

Threshing.

From the woodcut called *Le Batteur en Grange*.

The ſcene is the threſhing-floor within the barn. The threſher, in full relief againſt the light ſtreaming in through the open door behind him, is bareheaded and bareſooted. He is ſwinging his flail, with a geſture full of energy and veracity, above the ſheaves ſpread out before him on the floor. There are other ſheaves in rear of him, but they have paſſed beneath his flail, and are only ſheaves of ſtraw. In the background, a ladder is leant againſt the farmyard wall; and there is a tangle of branches againſt the clear, funny ſky.

THRESHING.

(*Le Batteur en Grange.*)

XVI.

Shearing.

From *La Tondeuſe de Moutons;* a ſixth woodcut in the *Travaux des Champs.*

A ſhed in the farmyard, under cover of which the ſhepherd is holding down a ſheep to be ſhorn by the *tondeuſe.* She has her frock pinned up and back over her petticoats; ſhe wears ſabots and a white linen cap, like the *Cardeuſe* and the *Petite Bergère;* and ſhe holds back the fleece with one hand while ſhe plies her ſhears with the other, the ſheep meanwhile lying inert and abſolutely paſſive. In the background are the thatch and chimney of the farmſtead.

In France much of the ſhearing is done by women. This being the caſe, it is not ſurpriſing that the *tondeuſe* ſhould have been a favourite type of Millet's. The *Grande Tondeuſe* (1861) is one of his greateſt achievements; and there are others beſide.

SHEARING.

(*La Tondeuse de Moutons.*)

XVII.

Flax-Pulling.

From *L'Arracheuſe de Lin:* yet another of the types of ruſtic labour pourtrayed in the *Travaux des Champs.*

To cut through the ſtalks of flax would be to make waſte of them. The ripe plant has to be gathered by hand; and, having been pulled up bodily from the ground, it is ſtacked in bundles to get ſun-dried, juſt as wheat is. This operation it is that forms the ſubject of the preſent illuſtration.

The flax-gatherer is ſtooping to her taſk, of twiſting up and bundling the ſtalks, in an attitude expreſſive of a certain amount of carefulneſs and pains. Hard by are ſheaves already ſtacked for the drying. Behind her, the field unharveſted, a great expanse of white aſhen yellow, ſtretches away into the far diſtance.

FLAX-PULLING.

(L'Arracheuse de Lin.

XVIII.

Flax-Crushing.

From the companion ſtudy to the foregoing illuſtration, *La Broyeuſe de Lin.*

Once dried, the flax is ſet acroſs a long block, to which is attached a kind of beetle working on a hinge, and is cruſhed out between the two. By this means the uſeful parts of the ſtalk are made ſeparable from the waſte, preparatory to the ſeveral proceſſes of manufacture.

As is ſhown by the illuſtration, flax-cruſhing is indoor work. The place is evidently an out-houſe of ſome ſort, with a loft above, and a ladder for ſtairway. The operative is bare-armed, and wears a linen cap and a big coarſe apron. She is juſt in the act of bringing down the beetle with her right hand on a ſheaf of flax which ſhe is holding acroſs the block with her left.

FLAX-CRUSHING.

(*La Broyeuse de Lin.*)

XIX.

Faggotting.

From the ſtudy called by Millet *Le Faiſeur de Fagots*.

The ſcene is an avenue in the foreſt. A young woodman, in a blouſe and a ſtraw hat, is cutting faggots with a bill-hook, at a rough block formed of the ſtump of a tree.

The ground beyond him is ſtrewn, as far as the eye can ſee, with loppings thinned from the trees above; and there is a wood-pile to the left, in the middle diſtance.

FAGGOTTING.

(*Le Faiseur de Fagots.*)

XX.

Spinning.

From the laſt of the *Travaux des Champs* Series—a woodcut called *La Fileuſe.*

In a cottage interior the ſpinner is ſitting before the window at her wheel, her foot on the treadle, and the full rock, or diſtaff, in her hand. To the left of her is a baſket of wool; and againſt the farther wall is a ſack.

The ſpinning-wheel is as old as the ſpade, and as eſſential a feature in ruſtic life. "When Adam delved and Evé ſpan," ſays one of the moſt ancient of Engliſh dittons; and a Spaniſh proverb makes ſpinning of equal importance with weeping and child-bearing in woman's exiſtence. From Theocritus downwards, the poets and painters of ruſticity have made much of the ſubject. "O diſtaff, friend of thoſe that ſpin," ſang the poet of Syracuſe, at Theogenès, wife of Nicias, the phyſician of Miletus; "gift of grey-eyed Athene to dames whoſe hearts are ſet on houſewifery." * One of Béranger's prettieſt little ſong-dramas is of a maiden ſpinning, ſpinning to ranſom her bridegroom from the cruel Engliſh; and the heroine of the old Iriſh brigade ballad reſolves to make the ſupreme ſacrifice of her wheel, reel and rock and all,—

> "To buy for my love a ſword of ſteel,
> For Willy among the ruſhes, O!"

to the prejudice of the ſame heavy-handed and high-hearted race. As for Burns, he has written of the wheel in all humours.

> "Gat ye me, O gat ye me,
> Gat ye me wi' naethin'?
> Rock and reel and ſpinning-wheel"—

ſays one of his heroines, "the tap o' Eccleſechan," as ſhe calls herſelf. Another—a dame "whoſe heart is ſet on houſewifery," this one—ſings a ſong of ſpinning that is one of the beſt of its author's many pleaſant carols of trades. "O leeze me on my ſpinning-wheel," ſhe ſays:—

> "O leeze me on my rock and reel,
> Frae tap to tae that cleeds me bien,
> And keeps me fiel and warm at e'en!"

and ſo on, through an aſſociation of ſpinning with all the charming ſights and ſounds of country life—with lintwhites ſinging, and trotting brooks, and the landrail croaking among the clover, and "the little ſiſhes' caller reſt"—until the end. In a very different key is the ſong of the "Weary pund o' tow," with the drunken gammer tippling as ſhe ſpins, and breaking the rock acroſs her indignant gaffer's pate.

Millet knew of ſpinning and the wheel from his earlieſt childhood. The ſpinner's taſk is the theme of one of his moſt charming works, the *Femme au Rouet,* a picture now in the collection of M. Georges Petit.

* In Mr. Lang's tranſlation: Macmillan & Co., 1880.

SPINNING.

(*La Fileuse.*)

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